

# Implementation of Digital Marketing in Building Padang City Branding

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## Abstract

Competition between tourism marketers and tourists occurs on social media. As the Internet advances, travelers have begun to take on the role of content producers and have started uploading photos, videos, and travel comments – on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube –, and even making recommendations of sites or places visited and services received. 1) the purpose of the research (The purpose of this study is to examine how digital marketing is used as a promotional tool for city branding. City branding managers need to recognize the social working method of social media which is characterized as a storytelling space and requires active story makers). 3) the results (The findings show that city area managers are required to master the internet and digital marketing, including storytelling techniques to promote their city branding). 4) major findings (The status and social network of a storyteller also play a key role in city branding marketing). 2) data, materials, and methodology (This study focuses on the city of Padang but can also be applied to other cities).

*Keywords:* digital marketing; city branding; padang city; tourism marketers; social media.

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## 1. Introduction

The competition between tourism marketers and tourists takes place on social media. With the advancement of the internet, tourists began to take on the role of content producers and began to upload photos, videos, and travel comments – on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube –, and many times these tourists make recommendations from the places they have visited, particularly on the services given by the site's management. This affects the digital marketing strategy in a region where its development is conducted by promoting its City Brand, including the Marketing Manual or Guide and the establishment of a smartphone digital framework and web portal. Tourism, however, according to Bertino is an integral part of many people's lives, which can be observed on social media where the third most popular topic on Facebook after music and television is vacations and travel experiences (Millie, 2014).

Due to the extensive use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the tourism sector, it has become an essential and integrated tool to attract tourists carried out through mobile applications and web portals or websites. According to Kumar, many companies have shifted their marketing strategy by utilizing the ICT, particularly the Internet, as a means of promoting products and services they have. In recent years, new technologies have affected the concept of people's lives concerning how fast people receive information and price consulting in many varied areas of tourism, demanding cities to market themselves as products (Kumar, 2016).

Papadopoulos and Heslop (2002) state that place branding or city branding refers to “the creation of a brand for a geographic location, usually to create positive associations and distinguish it from the position of others.”. Initially, it was known as 'location marketing.' The term 'city branding' was used for the first time since the early 1990s and has become common since 2000.

However, the city branding strategy must be handled in a comprehensive and appropriate context to optimize the effect of the city logo on the city branding phase, to achieve city results in the form of an effective and sustainable brand (Portet & de San Eugenio Vela, 2014). The city of Padang, for example, made a city branding “Halal Padang Tourism” from the titles “World's Best Halal Culinary Destination” and “World's Best Halal Destination” which it obtained in 2016 (Adona et al., 2020).

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This shows that the application of city branding still relies on the construction, communication, and management of the city's image (Kavaratzis, 2004). To comprehend the application of city marketing, the concept of corporate branding is the most relevant one. The image of the city provides, among other things, the principal for developing policies to work toward economic development, so that the communities in the city can identify their city.

This study is carried out to examine how digital marketing is used as a promotional tool for city branding amid social media which requires a fundamental rethinking of practical marketing as a brand. It is created simultaneously through informal conversations of social media writers that are largely beyond the control of marketers. While a brand can embody commercially produced stories and consumer stories about individual experiences and points of view that are included in the brand narrative. All of those changes reduce or destroy the identity of city branding.

## 2. Literature Review

As Berthon, Pitt, Plangger, and Shapiro (2012) point out, the effects of social media are “sociological and somewhat revolutionary in their implications for business” (Lund et al., 2018). The City Government plays a role in promoting the city in general regarding interesting things that can be visited by foreign tourists and investors. The benefits are felt not only by the government as a tax receipt but also by tourism business actors such as hotel owners, business bureaus, souvenir sellers, and others. Social media facilitates democratization through the production of social media content and shifts the power of mass media about consumers who are actively engaged in producing content and publishing this content through communication channels and in the absence of marketers (DesAutels, 2011; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Peters et al., 2013).

Digital marketing is needed because today, organizations, from ICT-based businesses to multinational corporations, are much more recognized when they involve digital media within. Therefore, using digital tools is highly recommended, especially for this purpose (Peters et al., 2013). It should be noted that digital strategies need much time and resources; feedback and tangible steps to achieve the company's vision and goals by making use of the resources and strategies. This form of technique should be implemented for the reasons: a) using a digital strategy can construct the data into business intelligence for both consumers and competitors. Subsequently, information is necessary for the success of the business; b) improving customer experience using the digital strategy and overviewing the communication flow of the company using its brand; c) constantly educating the customers to be knowledgeable on the use of digital media, where at the same the ICT market is increasing as well; and d) having the digital products, positioning themselves to sell is necessary for the marketers to do.

Lund et al., (2018) offer 5 recommendations for Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) to strengthen the practices or branding on social media following the conceptual framework and the role of power technology, namely: DMOs must break down the barriers between online and offline worlds to join virtual and physical mobility; recognize the importance of collaborative storytelling with various storytellers or storytellers on social networks; always actively engaged in day-to-day conversations, listening and exchanging discourse, constantly creating stories together with users; and regard social media users as potential allies with a common agenda, and keeping in their mind that they are individual storytellers, and recognizing the social roles that they should conduct and deliver their experiences into their social networks.

## 3. Research Method and Materials

The research applies descriptive research methods with a qualitative approach. Researchers analyze applications made by government officials, development practitioners, tourists, and potential investors regarding digital marketing and city branding Padang Halal Tourism in increasing tourist and investor visits to the city of Padang. The qualitative approach was chosen to find out the point of view of the informants about the phenomena around them, their in-depth perception, perceptions, views, and how they subjectively interpret their existence.

Semi-structured interviews were performed with tourists and business owners whereas the participant observation technique was included. Even though the participants could acknowledge the presence of the observer, it was subjected and reciprocated in the act of observing. The interview emphasized the different emotional expressions, logical arguments, and communication from the subjects as they were chosen from different backgrounds; environments, and social strata. Eleanor stated, there are diversities in groups, cultures, stories, and interests in the search for meaning, which can be seen from people's subjective and affective experiences. An understanding of the complexity of phenomena dominates, in the hermeneutical approach and not in its causal explanation (Shaw, 1999).

#### 4. Results and Discussions

Tourism products are generally sold prior to consumption, and purchasing decisions rely heavily on positive stories and word of mouth (eWOM) through sites such as TripAdvisor and Facebook. Verily, consumers won't take any random destination or tourism company and be cautious about the risk that they will take. The tourism experiences posted by netizens on social media easily clarify the statements of tourism companies and governments that manage tourism and change the views of potential tourists and investors.

Tourists and investors get information mainly from those who have been to the city and from social media managed by the private sector. Industry stakeholders, professional bloggers, and media organizations that have relatively large followers and access to paid media, and relatively sufficient resources, proved to be constrained in building content and maintaining dialogue due to limited human resources, skills, and employee workloads. Although some of them can influence audience perceptions of city branding and provide effective recommendations, they have not fully utilized the potential contained in digital marketing.

Chaffey and Smith revealed 5 digital marketing indicators as follows (Chaffey & Smith, 2013): the functioning of Search Engine Marketing (SEM), online PR, online partnerships, interactive advertising, opt-in email marketing, and social media marketing. Even though the content from the website is easy to find and has been regulated by internet users, the government's website or social media is not getting enough attention and the information is not updated for potential tourists and investors. Online PR generally does not function very well in conducting public relations through press center sites or blogs. Online partnerships seem to be lacking in link building, and so is affiliate marketing. Aggregates of price comparison sites and online sponsorships are less visible because content creators are reluctant. Co-branding is seen for cities and regencies throughout the province with the same branding so that it does not show the characteristics of each region. The cooperation strategy between the two brands in the form of a joint offer should be carried out with a brand that is already strong and well-known, so it can save costs, increase revenue, and expand market reach with more target consumers.

Interactive advertising through the use of online advertisements such as banners and multimedia advertisements to achieve brand awareness and encourage clickthrough (through clicks from the audience) to target sites has been carried out by the government but does not fully reflect city branding marketing. Opt-in email marketing or the addition of a contact list in email marketing, through customers who have registered, is not optimal, and there is no guarantee that prospective foreign tourists and investors will agree to receive regular emails containing advertisements from marketers regularly due to a lack of human resources to do this, both in terms of the number of people and skills.

Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) can interact with social media users and their stories. Since Generation Y is tech-savvy, and updates almost every inch of their lives and a major part of their free time experience in their social networks, the connection with DMOs was established (Leask et al., 2014). No wonder traveling presents countless photo opportunities and experiences in its long phase and social media offers a suitable outlet for sharing these experiences with social networks. Previous research has shown that 93% of travelers are influenced by reviews in planning their trips and 80% of people who will make a trip purchase will ask their social network members for recommendations first (*The European NTO Digital Benchmark*, 2013).

It thus shows how social media is a key focus area for DMO branding strategies and destination brands are more susceptible to social media conversations and stories (Hays et al., 2013). For brand goals to be successful, DMOs must take into consideration the presence of social media data, particularly the positive and negative images of their visitors (Kladou & Mavragani, 2015); online stories significantly can influence large numbers of future online visitors (Martin et al., 2007); DMOs should examine the stories of their visitors to determine its further action based on myths facilitated by the destination (Woodside et al., 2007).

The use of websites and social media in government digital marketing is rarely known by tourists and potential investors. Some tourists and investors assess the design and delivery of important messages in city branding communications by the government in digital marketing tend to praise themselves, are too optimistic, do not provoke the audience to respond, open up opportunities to express criticism based on their experiences that contradict the information submitted by the government or private travel company.

## 5. Conclusion

Social media marketing is important in digital marketing because that encourages customer communication to government-owned sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or publisher sites, blogs, and forums. Digital marketing is expected to keep existing customers and build mutually beneficial partnerships. Therefore, the application of social media marketing needs to be maximized because it is one of the important elements in digital marketing.

In social media that is used as digital marketing, the government and city branding managers need to understand the social mechanism of social media which is characterized as a storytelling space and requires story makers to be active and sensitive to the impact of the stories they make. Furthermore, they are required to master the internet and digital marketing, including storytelling techniques to promote city branding. The status and social network of a storyteller also play a key role in city branding marketing.

The implementation of city branding promotions should emphasize promotions on blog media and well-known travel sites such as travel advisor which is the largest travel information center in the world. Cooperation with well-known travel influencers on social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and so on must also be encouraged considering that almost all internet users are social media users.

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